

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

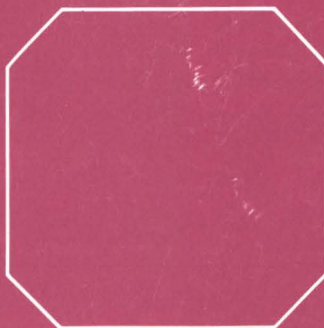
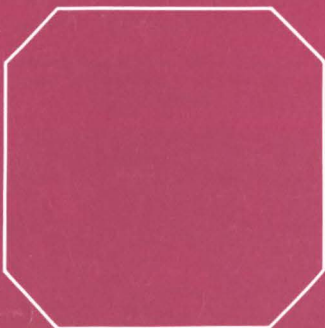
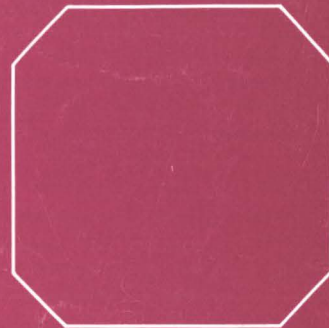
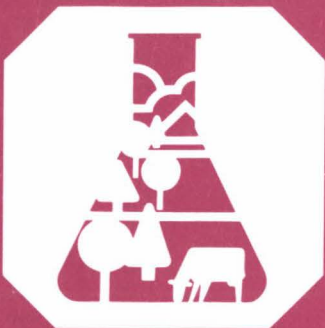
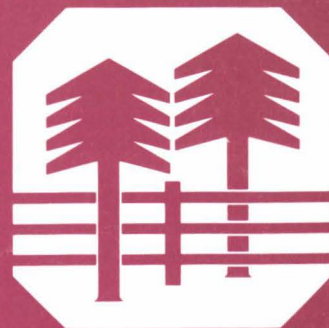
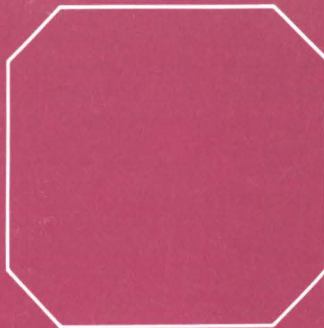
Washington, D.C.

FS-398



Putting Ideas To Work

The Forest Service in 1985



• Putting Ideas To Work •

The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, evokes differing images based on people's exposure to its programs and personnel. This exposure can come from camping on a National Forest, interacting with firefighters protecting property, or using a wood product made better through research.

The Forest Service has the duty of caring for forest land and serving the people who use it, through its three major program areas: the National Forest System, Research, and State and Private Forestry.

During the past 3 years, carrying out this duty has involved giving the public its money's worth. For in those 3 years, the Forest Service's charge has been to streamline itself—to study its operations and define jobs and paperwork that could be reduced, eliminated, or combined.

This task required commitment and action from agency leadership and personnel. Several studies on Service-wide programs and requirements and several studies on specific areas were undertaken.

In 1985, then, it was time to start implementing some of the hundreds of ideas resulting from these studies. Acting on these ideas will increase productivity and decrease costs of public services, as well as set the tone for regional and local Forest Service units to promote similar innovative actions to continue the task of streamlining.

Those actions as well as the more traditional challenges faced by the Forest Service combined to make 1985¹ an exciting and eventful year.

• Program Highlights •

It was a year of major activities that crossed program lines and highlighted cooperation among Forest Service program areas and between Federal and State agencies. These activities included wildfire suppression on a scale not seen for half a century, preparation of a proposal of historic proportions for interchanging Federal lands, and an intensive study of acid precipitation.

The worst fire season since 1934 occurred in 1985. For 10 consecutive months, firefighters from the Forest Service, States, and other Federal agencies were involved in suppressing lightning- and human-caused fires that occurred from Florida to Alaska.

Three million acres burned nationally, mostly on State and private land. On National Forest System land, 663,756 acres burned, a considerable increase from the 5-year average of 154,058 acres.

At the peak of the season, 20,000 trained firefighters were mobilized simultaneously. Eastern States shipped 63 crews to the West from State forestry agencies. Common firefighting standards for Federal and State agencies and the nationwide mobility of crews proved invaluable.

In January 1985, the Forest Service, in conjunction with the Department of

Interior's Bureau of Land Management, announced a proposal to interchange management of about 30 to 35 million acres of land and underlying minerals. The proposal was designed to enhance public service, reduce costs, and improve administrative efficiency, since both agencies administer multiple-purpose lands that frequently are intermingled.

A series of public hearings and solicited general public comment, as well as consultations with governors and Congressional members of the areas involved, resulted in a revised proposal. The revisions were incorporated into a legislative proposal for presentation to Congress in early 1986.

Meanwhile, the Forest Service joined in a critical national research effort as one of several agencies participating in studies of acid precipitation as part of the National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program. In 1985, the Forest Service and the Environmental Protection Agency tested acidity and alkalinity levels of 888 lakes in 10 Western States to learn more about the extent and possible effects of acid precipitation.

Included in the study were 425 wilderness lakes that were sampled by Forest Service personnel traveling by horse or on foot. Both agencies agreed that the data would present a good starting point for assessing the potential impact of acid precipitation on these lakes.

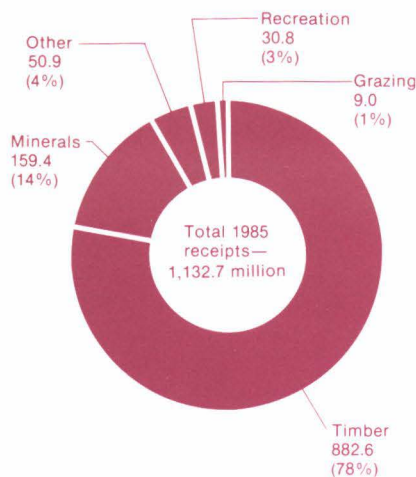
Wildfires burned 3 million acres in 1985.



¹Throughout this publication, "1985" refers to the fiscal year from October 1, 1984, to September 30, 1985, unless otherwise specified.

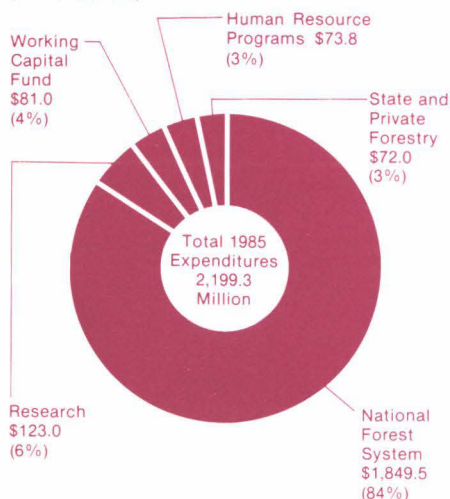
Distribution of Receipts by Program

(Million Dollars)



Distribution of Expenditures by Program Area

(Million Dollars)



• National Forest System •

Several activities relating to the National Forest System combined action and ideas that portend significant changes in the day-to-day operation of the agency.

For the last few years, the Forest Service has been seeking ways to deal with problems associated with a large volume of National Forest timber purchased for very high prices in the inflationary years of the late 1970s. This timber became very uneconomical to harvest when housing starts plummeted and timber markets were depressed.

A far-reaching remedy was carried out in 1985 after Congress passed the Timber Contract Payment Modification Act in 1984. The law enabled purchasers of contracts for National Forest timber to buy out of some of the contracts that were uneconomical for them to fulfill.

The final rules implementing this legislation issued in 1985 permitted each purchaser to buy out of up to 55 percent of the total volume (to a maximum of 200 million board feet) held in contracts awarded prior to Jan. 1, 1982, and still valid as of June 1, 1984. There were 380 applications involving about 1,600 timber sales and 9.7 billion board feet. The U.S. Treasury will receive over \$172 million in buyout payments.

The agency will be reevaluating and reoffering the turned-back sales over the next several years.

The question of the economics of timber sales also prompted a Forest Service study to measure the costs of the program more accurately. Directed by congressional and public concern about what was perceived as unprofitable timber sales, the agency organized a Timber Sales Cost Accounting Task Force to develop a system that displays more completely the costs, benefits, and revenues for the timber sale program.

Four objectives challenged the task force: to identify issues and technical aspects of timber sale program accounting; to formulate timber sale program accounting alternatives; to test the alternatives; and to evaluate and recommend a new national accounting process to Congress.

The task force is scheduled to complete testing in early FY 1986 and then to formulate a recommendation to present to Congress.

Economics was also a major consideration in evaluating the agency's range program. With the imminent expiration of the Public Rangelands Improvement Act of 1978 (PRIA), the Forest Service and the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management studied alternatives to the grazing fee formula established in PRIA. The two agencies drafted a report that showed alternative methods for determining fees for grazing livestock on more than 300 million acres of Federal land.

The report, to be submitted to Congress by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, considered the existing fee formula and five alternatives, ranging from modification of the current formula to competitive bidding for grazing permits. It evaluates the formula and the other grazing fee options.

National Forest planning continued as many plans reached the draft stage in 1985. With the target date for completion of these plans rapidly approaching, the year was one of the most active for issuing draft plans and soliciting public comments.

Of 123 documents for one or more National Forests, 23 were final and 67 were drafts filed with the Environmental Protection Agency or approved for publication at the end of the fiscal year.

The Forest Service began a study to measure the costs of timber harvesting.



• Forest Research •

Several research actions focused on studying environmental problems in order to develop strategies to combat them.

The southern pine beetle was one forest pest on which the Forest Service conducted additional research. The beetle reached epidemic proportions in the summer of 1985 in forests in the Gulf South. Estimates showed that it has destroyed 600 million board feet of timber so far, enough wood to build 60,000 homes.

The Forest Service began conducting an experiment to determine the potential for biological control of southern pine beetle, an alternative to chemicals.

In a preliminary research study, Southern Forest Experiment Station scientists introduced Douglas-fir beetle predators from Montana in a small test area of the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana to determine if they could help reduce populations of southern pine beetle.

The released insect resembles southern pine beetle predators found locally. Scientists expect the Montana bugs to mimic the local species more actively by finding southern pine beetle-infested trees and eating their occupants.

Continuing concern about availability of timber in the future prompted a collaborative research effort involving the Forest Service, representatives of State forestry agencies, forest industries, forestry schools, and forest owners.

The study, "The South's Fourth Forest: Alternatives for the Future," has been focused on the economic importance of forest resources and industries; historical changes in the forest resources and industries, and their causes; projections of changes in the timber resource; economic and societal implications of the projected change in the timber situation; and opportunities to increase timber supplies.

Preliminary findings released in 1985 confirmed that timber growth and inventories have been increasing in the South. However, current trends could have a serious effect on the future forest, particularly with regard to softwoods.

For example, while Southern timber harvests have shown a steady increase, new annual growth has flattened out since 1977. Contributing to that are several factors: nonindustrial timberland owners are not regenerating cutover pine stands as fast as previously projected; radial tree growth has declined in the past few years; widespread insect and disease outbreaks are killing trees; and the total area of timberland acres is declining faster.

The final results of this study will help the Forest Service, other agencies, and private landowners to plan more dynamic productivity from timberlands.

One of the highlights of the forestry research year took place at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wis. "The Lab" celebrated its 75th anniversary. Over the years, scientists there have come up with many new ways to use wood more efficiently.

For example, the Lab's early testing of waferboard, particleboard, and all-weather wood adhesives was responsible for making these once-revolutionary products commonplace in today's construction industry.

Providing affordable quality housing was one of the most important contributions the Lab's researchers gave to the American people. The world's first prefabricated all-wood house was built at the Lab.

The Lab also conducts research to protect homes after they are built. For instance, scientists are working to find methods for reducing the more than \$500 million in damages that termites cause each year in the United States. Other researchers are working to stop wood destruction caused by fungi and are developing better types of wood preservatives and stains.

• State and Private Forestry •

State and Private Forestry covers many activities designed to assist non-Federal forest owners. In 1985, these activities ranged from forming a council to focus on the small woodland owner to incorporating an integrated pest management system to combat the gypsy moth.

In 1984, the National Forum on Non-Industrial Private Forest Lands addressed ways to insure productive management of small woodlands. A logical outgrowth of this forum was the establishment in 1985 of a National Council on Private Forests.

The Council will serve as the clearinghouse for communication and coordination among the agencies and organizations dealing with nonindustrial private forest lands. Its job will be to focus on how the various segments of the forestry community can best join forces to encourage small private landowners, who own 58 percent of commercial forest lands, to practice better forestry.

In 1985 the Council sponsored a seminar on forest taxation and began a series of seminars on the changing Federal role in nonindustrial private forestry.

The Forest Service and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

A National Council on Private Forests focused on assisting the small woodland owner.



(APHIS) banded together in 1985 to formulate a new policy to combat gypsy moths, which have been spreading across the country. The agencies decided to use an integrated system of pest management on all projects to eradicate or suppress these pests. Gypsy moth caterpillars hatch from mid-April to early May. While in the caterpillar stage, the moth strips leaves from trees, causing serious economic and esthetic damage.

The integrated pest management approach combines several manipulation techniques with biological and chemical insecticides, which ensures the greatest combined punch under local conditions. These techniques include quarantines and inspection, parasite and predator management, a sex attractant trap, the sterile-male technique to overwhelm breeding populations, and management of forest stands.

The new policy is being applied nationwide, but environmental impacts of treatments are being worked out for each site before treatments begin.

The Forest Service also assisted States in a systematic process of forest resources planning, providing funding and technical assistance for specific projects. Federal technical assistance concentrated on identifying ways of using State forest resources for economic and social betterment.

Forty-eight States are in the process of developing or implementing, like the Forest Service, long-range forest resource plans to enhance the multiple values of forests. For States, the goal is to improve forestry programs, to develop public/private sector partnerships, and to build a desirable forestry future.

• Administration •

Since the Administration portion of the agency was the focal point for many of the studies to reduce costs and paperwork, it also became the center for action. The most far-reaching studies examined national requirements and regulations. They also set a precedent for field units to follow.

Eleven completed Productivity Improvement Studies and 5 completed National Administrative Review studies were combined into one action plan used to begin implementing 411 cost-reduction and efficiency improvement items at all Forest Service levels.

The cost reductions affected many aspects of Forest Service operations, not just the most obvious. For example, an offshoot of the National Administrative Review was development of a worker's compensation cost-management program. Recommendations were designed to reduce future injuries and resultant claims through a more effective safety and health program.

A productivity improvement study examined vehicle fleet management in the Forest Service. It identified significant cost savings and actions to improve use of Forest Service rolling stock, which totaled approximately 22,000 vehicles and pieces of heavy equipment.

The agency also completed its manual review project. The Forest Service Manual contains many volumes of direction and reporting requirements for agency activities. Overall, the project achieved a 50-percent reduction in the number of required reports, with some activities reducing up to 65 percent. This action will allow more time in the future for land stewardship and service.

The Federal Government often is criticized for excessive red tape. To alleviate some of that burden, the Forest Service conducted a National Informa-

tion Requirements Project that reduced by more than 60 percent the total amount of recurrent information needed nationally. Significant reductions were made in the number of forms and reports needed and in the amount of information used for the national budget.

In the midst of these actions, one new project that was launched in 1985 combined study and action almost simultaneously in a free-spirited pilot test. Four Forest Service units were picked to experiment with changes in administrative, research, and resource management activities.

What the changes would be, however, was left to unit personnel to create and test. Progress on this study will be monitored periodically. As ideas are tested and proven to increase productivity and quality of work or service, they will be examined for suitability of use by other Forest Service units.

• The Future •

In 1985, the Forest Service began acting on the many previous studies and ideas cutting across all the agency's programs. The emphasis on action, however, did not prevent the agency from continuing to develop concepts for even more ways to improve operations under its three major programs. This search for more efficient and innovative management is crucial to the continued success of the agency.

Some of the tasks begun in 1985 will most definitely affect the activities of 1986 and beyond. The payoff is found in the creativity of thought and the subsequent potential it generates for positive change.

An agency that retains traditions can also mobilize the full talents of its personnel to change. Such flexibility is necessary to provide for the changing needs of the present and future.

May 1986

The Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, is responsible for Federal leadership in forestry. It carries out this role through four main activities:

- Protection and management of resources on 191 million acres of National Forest System Lands.
- Cooperation with State and local governments, forest industries, and private landowners to help protect and manage non-Federal forest and associated range and watershed lands.
- Research on all aspects of forestry, rangeland management, and forest resources utilization.
- Participation with other agencies in human resource and community assistance programs to improve living conditions in rural areas.

1985 Statistics

Receipts — **\$1.13** billion

Expenditures — **\$2.20** billion

National Forest System — **190.7** million acres

Timber sold — **10.8** billion board feet

Timber harvested — **10.9** billion board feet

Roads maintained — **343,293** miles

Livestock grazed — **9.8** million animal-unit months

Wildlife and fish habitat improvements — **157,800** acres

Wilderness — **32.1** million acres

Recreational use — **225.4** million visitor days

Woodland owners assisted — **134,000**

Human resource programs — **71,669** persons served

Permanent full-time employees — **29,211**

Mineral cases processed — **28,500**